

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-26 (canceled)

27 (currently amended): An external electrode for a piezoceramic multilayer actuator, comprising a layer of a basic metallization applied to a ceramic material on a surface of the actuator, a reinforcing layer joined to said basic metallization by a joining layer; wherein ~~to which~~ a connecting wire is soldered to said reinforcing layer, and wherein the layer of basic metallization is structured by discontinuities or recesses.

28 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is composed of a printed pattern of a suitable termination paste, which printed pattern has been produced by means of a printing method.

29 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is formed by a mechanical, chemical or electrochemical removal in a layer of the basic metallization applied over the entire area.

30 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 28, wherein the basic metallization is composed of a suitable termination paste that has the composition Ag_xPd_y , where $x + y = 1$ and $1 > x > 0$.

31 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is formed by a porous electrochemical deposition of a suitable metallic material.

32 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 31, wherein the metallic material is nickel.

33 (currently amended): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is composed of areas disposed over the surface of the actuator

and ~~in that~~ the areas are at least large enough for respective adjacent internal electrodes to be joined together by at least one area.

34 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is composed of dots, in that the diameter of the dots is equal to 0.05 to 5 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator, in that the minimum distance between the dots is likewise equal to 0.5 to 5 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator, and in that a straight line extending through the dots encloses an angle with respect to the path of the internal electrodes that is approximately between 10 degrees and 80 degrees, preferably between 15 degrees and 40 degrees.

35 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 34, wherein the diameter of and the spacing between the dots are equal to two to three times the thickness of the ceramic layer of the actuator.

36 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is composed of parallel lines, in that the width of the lines is equal to 0.5 to 5 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator, in that the minimum distance between the lines is likewise equal to 0.5 to 5 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator, and in that the lines enclose an angle with respect to the path of the internal electrodes that is approximately between 10 to 80 degrees.

37 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 36, wherein the width of and the spacing between the lines are equal to 2 to 3 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator.

38 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is composed of lines disposed in grid-type

manner, in that the width of the lines is equal to 0.5 to 5 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator, in that the minimum distance between the lines is likewise equal to 0.5 to 5 times the thickness of the ceramic layers of the actuator, and in that the lines of the grid are at a random angle with respect to one another and to the path of the internal electrodes.

39 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27 wherein said basic metallization has no cracks therein.

40 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 39, wherein the joining layer between the metallization and reinforcing layer is composed of a solder that contains at least one of the metals Sn, Ag, Cu, Pb, Au, In, Ga.

41 (currently amended): An external electrode according to Claim 40, wherein the solder is a tin-containing material ~~material, preferably SnAg₄ or SnCu_{0.7}~~.

42 (previously presented): An external electrode according to Claim 27, wherein the joining layer between basic metallization and reinforcing layer is an electrically conductive adhesive.

43 (previously presented): A method for producing external electrodes according to Claim 27, wherein the layer of the basic metallization is structured by discontinuities and recesses.

44 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 43, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is produced as a printed pattern by means of a printing method using a suitable termination paste.

45 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 44, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is formed by a mechanical, chemical or electrochemical removal in a layer of the basic metallization applied over the entire area.

46 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 43, wherein the basic metallization is produced from a suitable termination paste that has the composition Ag_xPd_y , where $x + y = 1$ and $1 > x > 0$.

47 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 43, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is formed by a porous electrochemical deposition of a suitable metallic material.

48 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 47, wherein nickel is used as metallic material.

49 (currently amended): A method according to Claim 43, wherein the structure of the basic metallization is formed from areas distributed over the surface of the actuator and in that areas are produced that are at least large enough for respectively adjacent internal electrodes to be jointed together by at least one area.

50 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 27, wherein the reinforcing layer is soldered onto the basic metallization, and in that the solder contains at least one of the metals Sn, Ag, Cu, Pb, Au, In, Ga.

51 (currently amended): A method according to Claim 50, wherein the solder is a tin-containing material ~~material, preferably SnAg_4 or $\text{SnCu}_{0.7}$~~ .

52 (currently amended): A method according to Claim 50, wherein that metal from the solder is alloyed into the internal electrodes by the discontinuities in the structure of the basic metallization, and in that the ceramic material is weakened at these points, as a result of which preferred points are formed for possible crack formation and the crack path.

53 (new): An external electrode according to Claim 41, wherein said tin-containing material is selected from the group consisting of SnAg_4 and $\text{SnCu}_{0.7}$.

54 (new): A method according to Claim 51, wherein said tin-containing material is selected from the group consisting of SnAg_4 and $\text{SnCu}_{0.7}$.